



BEYOND THE EXHIBITS

North Carolina Museum of History

North Carolina Mountain Region

Difficult terrain once set the Mountain region apart—only American Indians and the hardest settlers first made their homes there. Developments in transportation, first through railroads and later through highways, eventually connected the Mountains to the rest of the state. Explore the traditions, geography, and industry of this wonderful part of North Carolina.

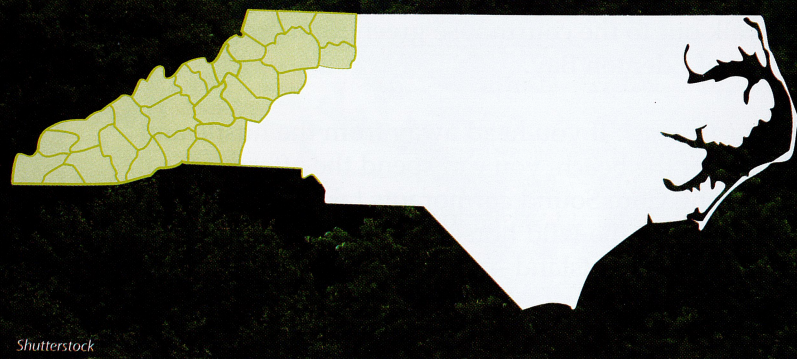
In this educational packet:

- Read “Wish You Were Here: The Mountain Region” from the Fall 2018 issue of the *Tar Heel Junior Historian* Magazine.
- Review the “Why is the Mountain Region Unique?” guide to learn about the Mountains of North Carolina.
- [Watch an excerpt on the Mountain Region](#) from our distance learning class, “Naturally North Carolina,” and follow along using the course materials.
- Explore “Cherokee Basketry” from the Fall 2005 issue of the *Tar Heel Junior Historian* Magazine.
- Test your skills by weaving a paper basket!
- Read “People and Nature: The Great Smoky Mountains National Park” from the Fall 2013 issue of the *Tar Heel Junior Historian* Magazine.
- Based on your reading, analyze the advantages and disadvantages of establishing the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Wish you were here!

The Mountain Region

by RoAnn Bishop



Fast Facts

Location: the western part of the state.

Number of counties: 24

Largest city: Asheville (population: 90,765)

Average temperatures: 30°F in winter,
65°F in summer

Size: 6,000 square miles

Soil: rocky brown loam

Known for: forests, paper, textiles, mining,
old-time and bluegrass music, folk crafts,
tourism, skiing, apples, Christmas trees

Part of: the Appalachian Mountains—
the oldest mountain range in the United States

Includes: part of the Blue Ridge Mountains,
the Great Smoky Mountains, and the Black
Mountains

Weird fact: rocks in the Mountain Region
range from 400 million to 1 billion years old

I was born and raised in the mountains of Western North Carolina, and this is the land I love. Over the years, I've lived, worked, and gone to school in other places, but the Blue Ridge and Great Smokies have always beckoned me back. Their gently rounded peaks—eroded by both time and the elements—offer me a welcoming embrace. The breeze and birdsong within their ancient forests help calm my restless mind. And the sounds of their rushing rivers, waterfalls, and rippling streams soothe my soul. Here is where I find peace and contentment. Here is my home.

Three or more generations of my family on both sides have lived, worked, raised their children, and been laid to rest in these mountains. I, too, will one day be buried here in a hillside plot. But there is comfort in knowing that, in family, there is a continuity of life.

The early mountain settlers—for whom life was hard and often short—had to become self-sufficient or die. Scrappy, stubborn, and strong-willed, they learned to make or grow whatever they needed. They passed down their hard-earned skills and knowledge to their sons and daughters. Then, in turn, they passed those things down to their children and their children's children. Thus, traditions were born.

Opposite page: Clouds breaking up after a rainy morning in the Blue Ridge Mountains—which are among the oldest in the world. The Cherokee Indians referred to the mountains as *Sa-koh-na-gas*, which means “blue.”
Photo by Ken Thomas, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

Below: The Mountain Region is home to the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. At the Oconaluftee Indian Village, you can follow the trails and step back in time to the 1760s. A Cherokee cultural expert will lead you on an interactive journey through Cherokee lifestyle and history. Learn more at visitcherokeenc.com. Image courtesy of visitcherokeenc.com.

Those traditions—still evident in a hand-sewn quilt, a split-rail fence, a prized pickling recipe or a beautifully built barn—continue today, as do the natural beauty and serenity of Western North Carolina's mountains. These things, in part, are what bring modern travelers and settlers to the area. Population growth, development, industrialization, pollution, and other factors have impacted both our mountain environment and our people. However, both have endured and will continue to do so.

The opportunities to experience Western North Carolina's mountains and its traditions are limitless. State and federal forests, local and state parks, recreation area, campgrounds, adventure companies, family farms, and many other businesses offer chances to hike, bike, boat, fish, swim, canoe, kayak, rock climb, zip line or enjoy many other outdoor activities, either individually or as a group. Such activities are good for those seeking exercise, some solitude, or a bit of both.

Much of the mountaineers' history and heritage has been preserved in museums, historic sites, festivals, and other events around the region. Each one is worth a visit. You might find your home here, too. 🌸

RoAnn Bishop is director of the Mountain Gateway Museum and Heritage Center in Old Fort. Learn more about the museum at www.mgmnc.org.



First in Forestry



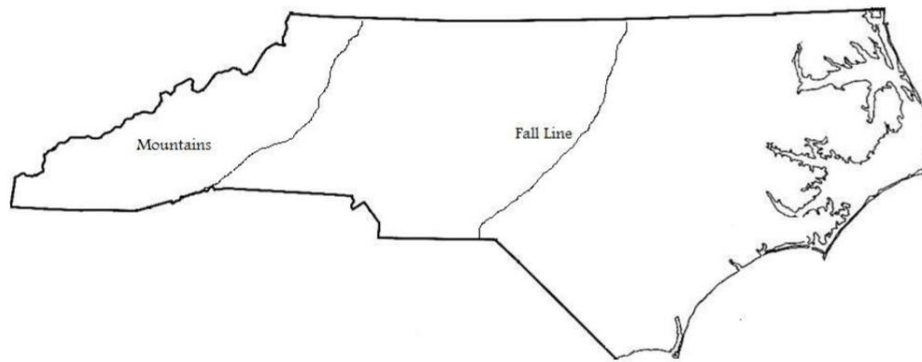
Many North Carolina license plates declare that we were “First in Flight”—to celebrate the Wright brothers' first powered flight on December 17, 1903, at Kitty Hawk. But did you know that our state was also “First in Forestry”?

In 1895, German Carl Schenck, a PhD in forestry science, came to North Carolina to work as the forester at the Biltmore Estate near Asheville. He discovered that many young men were eager to serve as apprentices to learn these scientific methods. In 1898, with the permission of Biltmore owner George W. Vanderbilt, Schenck set up the Biltmore Forest School in some abandoned farm buildings and began to teach. This was the first formal school for the scientific study of forestry in the United States.

In 1914, after Vanderbilt's death, his widow sold 87,00 acres of Biltmore forestland to the federal government. Schenck designed an initial plan that in 1916 became Pisgah National Forest—North Carolina's first national forest. Though Schenck returned to Germany, in 1952 he was awarded an honorary doctor of forestry degree from NC State University.

Top: The 1905 class of Biltmore Forest School in the Pink Beds area of what is now Pisgah National Forest. Inset: The Biltmore Forest School. Images, public domain.

Why is the Mountain Region Unique?



Location & Land Features

- The Mountain region is in the western part of North Carolina. It is bordered on the east by the Piedmont region and on the west by Tennessee. The Mountain region extends from Virginia in the north to South Carolina in the south.
- The Mountains comprise about 6,000 square miles, or approximately 16 percent of North Carolina's land area.
- The Mountain region is part of the Appalachian Mountains chain, which is the oldest mountain range in the United States.
- In North Carolina the following mountain ranges are part of the Appalachian Mountains chain: the Blue Ridge Mountains, the Great Smoky Mountains, and the Black Mountains.
- The Blue Ridge Mountains separate the Mountain region from the Piedmont.
- The age of rocks in the Mountain region range from 400 million to 1 billion years old.
- Twenty-three counties make up the Mountain region: Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey.
- Asheville is the largest city in the Mountain region and has a population of approximately 80,000.
- The Mountain region is steep and rugged, with high mountains and deep valleys. It has the highest peaks in the entire Appalachian Mountains range.
- The Mountain region's elevation begins at 1,500 feet in the east. Forty-nine peaks stand more than 6,000 feet high, and 174 peaks reach more than 5,000 feet.
- The Eastern Continental Divide separates the rivers of the Mountain region. Rivers east of the divide flow into the Atlantic Ocean; those west of the divide flow into the Gulf of Mexico.
- Grandfather Mountain is named for its resemblance to the profile of an elderly man lying on his back facing the sky. It serves as a habitat for black bears, cougars, deer, panthers, otters, bald eagles, and golden eagles. A 228-foot swinging suspension bridge, at an elevation of one mile (5,280 feet), provides visitors with access to one of the mountain's peaks and is the tallest suspension bridge in North America. At 5,964 feet, Grandfather Mountain is the highest peak in the Blue Ridge Mountains. It is also

the only private park in the world designated by the United Nations as an International Biosphere Reserve.

- The predominant soil of the Mountain region is rocky brown loam. The valleys have some fertile farmland, but the Mountains have the poorest farmland in the state overall.
- At 6,684 feet tall, Mount Mitchell in Yancey County is the highest mountain in the eastern United States. It is part of the Black Mountains range.

Climate

- The Mountain region's climate is characterized by mild summers and cold winters with significant snowfall. The average temperature for the Mountain region is 48 degrees Fahrenheit. The growing season—the period between the last killing frost in the spring and the first killing frost in the fall—is shorter in the Mountains than in the Coastal Plain and Piedmont.
- The Mountain region receives the highest amount of rainfall in the state.

Water Resources

- The rivers in the Mountain region are rocky and swift. Because of this, they are not easily navigable.
- Early settlers built gristmills along streams for grinding wheat and corn. The swift currents of the streams powered the mills.
- The major rivers of the Mountain region include the French Broad, Little Tennessee, Hiwassee, Watauga, and New. These rivers flow west and are tributaries of the Tennessee River. They eventually empty into the Mississippi River.
- In the 20th century, the Tennessee Valley Authority built dams along some of the rivers in the Mountain region to control flooding and produce hydroelectric power. These dams also provided lakes for recreation. Fontana Dam was built on the Little Tennessee River in Swain and Graham counties between 1941 and 1944. At 480 feet, it is the tallest concrete dam east of the Rocky Mountains. The dam forms Fontana Lake.
- All the lakes in the Mountain region are man-made.

Forests

- Nantahala National Forest is the largest national forest in North Carolina and comprises some 530,000 acres.
- Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest, located in Nantahala National Forest, is dedicated to the memory of Joyce Kilmer, who wrote the poem "Trees."
- Pisgah National Forest contains more than 500,000 acres. Numerous waterfalls are located in the Pisgah Ranger District.

Flora

- The Mountain region contains a wide variety of trees. There are fifty varieties of trees native to the Mountains.
- The most predominant hardwoods are white oak, chestnut oak, white ash, black cherry, and hickory. In the early 1900s, blight (a disease of plants) destroyed the chestnut tree, which once populated the Mountain region.
- Dogwood, yellow birch, sugar maple, tulip poplar, and pines are found at lower elevations. Red spruce, Fraser fir, and balsam grow in the higher elevations.

- Wildflowers and flowering shrubs such as mountain laurel, flame azaleas, and purple rhododendron attract tourists to the Mountains in the spring and summer.
- The brilliant fall foliage of the Blue Ridge Parkway attracts thousands of tourists each year.

Fauna

- Cougars and bobcats are native to the Mountain region.
- Small game such as squirrels and rabbits are plentiful in the Mountains. Deer, black bears, foxes, raccoons, squirrels, and rabbits are also common.
- Elk and buffalo once inhabited the Mountains, but these animals moved west as their grazing land was destroyed by early settlers, who cleared the land to plant crops.
- The last native elk in North Carolina was killed in the late 1700s.
- In 2002, 52 elk were reintroduced to the Mountain region, in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The elk are tracked by radio collars and are studied for their environmental impact.
- The river otter, the peregrine falcon, and three species of small fish have been reintroduced into the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.
- More than 100 types of birds live in the Mountains. These include the wild turkey, bobwhite, swan, wood duck, and chimney swift.

Agriculture

- The Mountain region has the shortest growing season of the three regions in North Carolina because its winters are longer and colder.
- Slash-and-burn agriculture—a method of farming in which a forest or woodland is cleared by cutting and burning—was practiced in pioneer days. This practice led to erosion.
- Early farmers in the Mountains grew wheat, oats, barley, corn, flax, fruits, and vegetables and also raised hogs and cattle. Because of the region's few roads and unnavigable rivers, farmers did not have a reliable method of transporting their crops to market until the arrival of railroad in western North Carolina in the late 1800s.
- Early settlers in the Mountains allowed their livestock to graze on uncultivated land. This practice is called open-range grazing. Hogs and cattle became a cash crop of the Mountain region in the 1800s.
- Settlers in the Mountain region traded furs, feathers, beeswax, and roots such as ginseng and snakeroot (which were used as medicine) to frontier merchants.
- Today's Mountain farmers grow corn, wheat, oats, barley, hay, burley tobacco, fruits, and vegetables on a small scale. Beef cattle and chickens are raised to sell at market.
- The Mountain region's valleys and hillsides are used for growing apples and apple trees.
- A recent cash crop in the Mountain region is the Christmas tree. The Fraser fir is the most popular variety of Christmas tree grown in the state.

Minerals

- The Cherokee made objects from copper, silver, and gold found in the Mountains.
- In the 1820s and 1830s, a gold rush occurred in the Mountains when prospectors entered the region mining for gold after its discovery in the western Piedmont.
- The Mountain region is rich in mineral resources.

- Iron was in such abundance in the Mountain region that in the early 1800s the Great Smoky Mountains were nicknamed “the Great Iron Mountains.” Timber from the forests was burned into charcoal to smelt iron ore. Removing large numbers of trees left barren landscapes.
- Emeralds, rubies, and garnets are found in small amounts in North Carolina.
- A 1,445-carat star sapphire and a 1,154-carat star sapphire were discovered in the Mountains of North Carolina.
- Gem mines near Franklin, Bryson City, and other Mountain towns attract tourists searching for precious gemstones. There are 13 mines in the Mountain region for amateur prospectors.

American Indians

- Archaeologists have evidence that an ancient people lived in the Mountain region at least 11,000 years ago. They refer to this early group as the Pisgah culture. The Cherokee believe these ancient people are their ancestors.
- The Pisgah people lived in palisaded towns and were hunters and farmers. Corn was their staple crop. Their culture was rich in tradition and rituals. Sometime during the 1500s, these people moved from the central part of the Mountain region to the far western part.
- The Cherokee occupied the Mountain region when the first European explorers arrived in the 1500s. They called themselves Ani-Yun-Wiya, or “the Principal People.”
- The early Cherokee people lived in the southern Appalachian Mountains in parts of North Carolina, South Carolina, West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama. The Mountain region was the tribe’s heartland.
- By the late 1600s, the Cherokee had begun doing business with European traders, exchanging deer hides for tools, firearms, and other goods. Over time, many Cherokee people became indebted to traders who offered them goods in advance.
- In the 1700s England, France, and Spain competed for power in North America. The Cherokee were courted as allies by both the English and the French and became embroiled in the growing conflict.
- Diseases brought to America by Europeans took a toll on native peoples. In 1738–1739 a smallpox epidemic killed about half of the Cherokee population in the Mountain region.
- In 1761 Lieutenant Henry Timberlake, an American colonist, visited the Cherokee. In 1762 he accompanied three Cherokee chiefs to London to visit the court of King George III. Timberlake’s memoirs were published in 1765 and provide maps of Cherokee villages and descriptions of Cherokee life.
- During the American Revolution, the Cherokee sided with the British, to protect their lands from further settlement. In July 1776 Patriot militia general Griffith Rutherford and some 2,400 men invaded Cherokee country and destroyed 32 villages. The Cherokee sued for peace.
- Between 1780 and 1830, the Cherokee ceded land again and again, hoping to end the advance of settlement and still maintain their way of life.
- In 1821 Sequoyah, who was born in the North Carolina territory (an area now in Tennessee), created a syllabary (set of written characters), which became the written language of the Cherokee. Within months, many Cherokee had learned to read and write. In 1828 the first edition of the Cherokee Phoenix newspaper was published in Cherokee and English.

- In 1838 some 17,000 North Carolina Cherokee were forcibly removed from their land in the Mountains to the Indian Territory on the “Trail of Tears.” About 4,000 people died during the 1,200-mile trek due to poor conditions, exposure, and lack of supplies. A few hundred Cherokee hid to evade capture. The United States Army offered them a trade: if the Cherokee brave Tsali, who was wanted by the government, surrendered to General Winfield Scott, the remaining Cherokee would be allowed to stay in North Carolina. Tsali agreed and was shot by the army. A reservation, the Qualla Boundary, was established for the remaining Cherokee in western North Carolina. The descendants of these Cherokee became the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

Settlers to the Mountain Region

- Because of its remoteness from the Coastal Plain (where earliest settlement began) and Piedmont, the Mountain region was the last area of North Carolina to be settled by Europeans.
- English, German, Welsh, French, African American, and Scots-Irish settlers began moving into the Mountains in the 18th century.
- One-third of the settlers were Scots-Irish, or Ulster Scots, whose ancestors originated in the lowlands of Scotland and moved to Ulster province in Northern Ireland in search of economic opportunities. There they raised sheep and flax and developed a lucrative trade in the manufacture of wool and linen. Facing English persecution, more than 200,000 Scots-Irish left Northern Ireland and settled in Pennsylvania. Their descendants moved south to North Carolina’s Mountains, where they preserved much of their culture and tradition due to the region’s geographical isolation.
- In the 1770s many white settlers became permanent residents of the Watauga settlements (in present-day Tennessee). The Watauga settlements were several communities in what the settlers believed was Virginia but was actually North Carolina’s Western Territory, which had been promised to the Cherokee.
- The Watauga settlers leased land from the Cherokee. Because this land was outside the geographic boundaries of any colonial government, the settlers formed their own association of commissioners in 1772 to handle routing government of the region.
- In 1777 North Carolina established Washington County in the area of the Watauga communities. (Washington County became part of Tennessee in 1796.)
- By the late 1700s, other white settlers had established homes in the Swannanoa area of present-day Buncombe County.
- Because Mountain counties were large in size and transportation was difficult, it was challenging for residents to travel to their county seats to conduct business, such as recording land purchases and wills or pursuing legal claims.
- Mountain region residents requested that new counties be created, and the state legislature established Buncombe County in 1792 and Ashe County in 1799. These additional counties helped lessen the distance to county seats and also increased Mountain region participation in the state legislature.
- In the early 1800s, more settlers arrived in the Mountain region. Some came from the Piedmont and the Coastal Plain, traveling through Swannanoa Gap, Hickory Nut Gap, Gillespie Gap, and Deep Gap. Other settlers came from Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia to the Piedmont on the Great Wagon Road and then headed west to the Mountains.

- Enslaved African Americans were brought to the Mountain region to work on large farms, but the majority of farms were small. Because getting goods to market was difficult, most Mountain farmers did not grow cash crops, and slaves were not needed.

Paper, Textiles, and Mining

- In 1908 Champion Fiber Company of Ohio opened a plant in Canton. Canton's location near a huge supply of spruce and its welcoming environment to industry helped make it the choice for a pulp mill.
- The company provided much-needed economic stimulus to the region, including over 10,000 stable jobs.
- Champion's employees strongly supported the company. This support proved helpful when Champion faced mounting criticism for polluting the Pigeon River. Downriver from the mill, people in Tennessee were dying from eating fish from the river.
- In the late 1980s and 1990s, local, regional, and state agencies required the paper mill to reduce the pollutants it discharged into the Pigeon River and to help clean up the river.
- Today, the Canton mill is known as the Blue Ridge Paper Mill. It is one of the oldest continuously operating paper mills in the United States. Debate continues about its impact on the Pigeon River.
- Although the furniture industry was established primarily in the Piedmont, the presence of hardwood trees and the construction of railroads in the Mountains helped this region participate in this industry by supplying much-needed lumber.
- By 1900 Mountain farm families were leaving their farms and moving to mill villages in both the Mountain and Piedmont regions to work in the textile mills. Many farmers who made the move were in debt. Others were tenant farmers and sharecroppers who were looking for a better life for their families.
- Workers in Mountain textile mills were paid subsistence wages and required to shop at the company store, where goods were sold at inflated prices. Some mills paid their employees in scrip rather than in legal currency. Scrip had to be redeemed at the company store.
- Often entire families had to work in the mill to make enough money to feed and clothe themselves. Extended families sometimes worked in the same mill and lived near each other in the mill village.
- By the 1920s Beacon Mills, on the Swannanoa River in Buncombe County, was the largest manufacturer of blankets in the world. Small textile plants were located in and around Asheville by the early 1930s.
- Much of the textile industry in the Mountain region has closed in the last two decades due to international competition.
- North Carolina leads the nation in the production of industrial minerals in the 21st century. Mica, feldspar, crushed stone, sand and gravel, tungsten, talc, olivine, and kaolin are important to the Mountain region's economy.
- Mining is a half-billion-dollar industry in North Carolina.

The Blue Ridge Parkway

- In the 1930s government officials in North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia realized that a roadway crossing the Appalachian Mountains would benefit the citizens of their states by improving transportation and increasing tourism. Building such a

highway would offer employment to the many people who had lost their jobs in the Great Depression.

- The chartering of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in 1934 led to increased tourism to the area. The growth in automobile ownership resulted in improved roads in the Mountain region.
- Construction of the Blue Ridge Parkway began in 1935 after much debate and political wrangling over location and financing of the roadway. The parkway was intended to enhance the natural beauty of the region. To this day, billboards and commercial interests are not allowed, the speed is leisurely, and intersections are few.
- Enormous engineering difficulties faced the crews building the Blue Ridge Parkway, who worked to cause minimal impact to the natural surroundings. Few maps of the area existed, and many landowners were reluctant to sell right-of-ways or land needed for the project. Construction continued steadily until World War II, when funding was diverted to the war effort.
- In 1968 the last seven-mile stretch of the Blue Ridge Parkway remained to be completed around Grandfather Mountain. To preserve the mountain's steep slopes, a viaduct was built 1,200 feet above the ground. Today the Linn Cove Viaduct is considered an engineering marvel.
- The 469-mile Blue Ridge Parkway was dedicated in September 1987, 52 years after construction began. Over 600 million visitors have used the roadway, which contains 26 tunnels, dozens of bridges, and hundreds of parking areas and overlooks with spectacular views.

The Great Smoky Mountains National Park

- During the early 1900s, industrial logging stripped many mountains of their forests. By the mid-1920s, over 300,000 acres of clear-cutting had left a large part of the Smoky Mountains bare.
- A group of people who recognized the beauty of the unspoiled part of the mountains suggested making the Smoky Mountains a national park to preserve the 100,000 acres of uncut forest. A leader of this group was Horace Kephart, a librarian by training who had moved to western North Carolina in 1904.
- Kephart wrote the book *Camping and Woodcraft: A Guidebook for Those Who Travel in the Wilderness*, which he based on his explorations of the Smoky Mountains. The book became a "Bible" for those seeking to hike and camp in the region.
- George Masa was another leader in the movement to save the Smoky Mountains. Masa's photographs of the region captured the natural beauty found there. Together, Masa and Kephart produced a booklet promoting their ideas about conservation. After Congress authorized the park in 1926, fund-raising began for the \$10 million needed to purchase the land.
- Money for the park was eventually raised, aided by pledges from many Mountain residents and support from philanthropist John D. Rockefeller, and the logging ceased. Inhabitants of the proposed park lands had to leave their homes. Some sold their land willingly, but others refused and lost their property.
- After the start of the Great Depression, many people could not pay the money they had pledged to the park. President Franklin D. Roosevelt got involved and allocated \$1.5 million to finish purchasing land for the park. This allocation represented the first use of federal monies to buy land for a national park.

- Today the Great Smoky Mountains National Park is one of the most visited national parks in the United States. The contributions of Horace Kephart and George Masa are recognized in Mount Kephart and Masa Knob, which lie within the park.
- The park contains 25 percent old growth forest and over 100 species of trees and dozens of species of fish, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals. About 1,500 species of flowering plants are found there. The United Nations named the Great Smoky Mountains National Park an International Biosphere Reserve in 1976

Music

- Old-time music developed in the Appalachian Mountains in the 1700s. It incorporated the music brought to America by European immigrants and the rhythmic traditions brought by Africans. Old-time music is played using various stringed instruments, such as the fiddle, guitar, and banjo. The banjo originated in Africa and was introduced to North America by slaves.
- Old-time and bluegrass music are also known as string-band music because they feature stringed instruments. String bands could be formed instantly at social gatherings by people who brought instruments with them.
- Pioneer communities came together for entertainment such as cornhusking, quilting bees, tobacco curing, apple stringing, logrolling, and wood chopping. Music for dancing accompanied these activities, and the fiddle was the featured instrument. Bluegrass music developed in the early 1940s and became popular after World War II. It was inspired by Scots-Irish, English, and Welsh music brought to America in the colonial period. Bluegrass musicians use stringed instruments such as the fiddle, mandolin, banjo, guitar, and bass fiddle. Vocal harmonies featuring a high tenor voice give the music a “high lonesome sound.”
- An early leader in this musical style was Bill Monroe. Monroe formed a band called the Blue Grass Boys that featured banjo player Earl Scruggs, a North Carolina native.
- The radio had a great impact on isolated Mountain communities. By the 1920s radio had connected these areas with the outside world. Popular music from northern cities migrated south, and country musicians were heard on radio broadcasts throughout the southern highlands. Popular radio programs included the National Barn Dance and, later, The Grand Old Opry.
- Southern folk music was recorded in the 1920s and 1930s and became popular across the United States.
- The Mountain Dance and Folk Festival is the longest-running folk festival in the United States. It was established in 1928 by Bascom Lamar Lunsford, of Asheville. It features traditional music and dance and is held in Asheville annually.

Dance

- Clogging is a form of dance that began in the Appalachian Mountains. Different dance styles from the various European settlers to the region combined into a foottapping dance, usually performed to fiddle or string-band music.
- Clogging is done in time with the music, and the heel keeps rhythm on the downbeat of the song. The dances of American Indians and free and enslaved Africans influenced clogging.
- While clogging can be an individual effort, groups of people also can clog as a unit, performing routines of choreographed steps.

- Clogging was originally part of circle or “square” dances, but over time square dance movements became standardized and clogging became more an individual form of dance.
- Characteristics of clogging can be seen in line dancing, tap dancing, and step dancing.

Mountain Crafts

- Mountain residents used the area’s natural resources to make everyday items, turning rivercane, clay and wood into baskets, pots, and furniture. Many of these functional objects were made with attention to form, style, and design. Creative traditions were passed down and enhanced by settlers with different cultural backgrounds.
- The isolation of the Mountain region helped create an environment in which family traditions were handed down for many years without significant outside influence. Artistic talent found expression in handicrafts that included basketmaking, weaving, woodworking, and quilting.
- In the late 1800s, small farmers in the Mountain region were economically squeezed as industry grew, the free grazing of livestock ended, and corporations purchased large tracts of land. Bartering declined as industrial jobs in the Mountains region introduced a cash-based system.
- In reaction to these changes, attempts were made to help Mountain families survive on their small farms. At the same time, there was renewed interest in regional handicrafts and a realization of their value and significance.
- The craft revival movement helped provide markets for handcrafted items and, in doing so, improved the quality of life for many families.
- Frances L. Goodrich, a missionary to the Mountains, helped the region become part of the growing southern Appalachian craft revival movement by founding a weaving cooperative, Allenstand Cottage Industries. In 1930 she also helped found the Southern Mountain Handicraft Guild (now called the Southern Highland Craft Guild), which remains one of the largest craft assemblies in the United States.
- In 1925 Olive Dame Campbell founded the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown to preserve and share the crafts, techniques, and tools of the Mountain region. The school continues today, offering classes in traditional crafts, music, and dance.
- A group of carvers at the Campbell Folk School took the name “Brasstown Carvers” in the 1950s. Today the Brasstown Carvers continue to create carvings, including their well-known animals and nativity figures.
- In 1929 Lucy Morgan founded the Penland School of Crafts in Mitchell County. The school’s mission was to encourage the tradition of making handmade goods. Pottery, weaving, and other skills were taught. Penland now covers 400 acres and offers classes in clay, wood, metal, textiles, and other media.
- Today many Mountain people continue to make traditional handicrafts. Examples of Mountain crafts include coverlets, basketry, corn husk art, and wood carvings. Coverlets, or coverlids, are bedcoverings woven in designs with colored wool yarn on backgrounds of natural linen or cotton. Coverlets were made throughout North Carolina from the colonial period to the late 19th century.
- American Indians have woven baskets from rivercane for centuries, weaving designs and using natural dyes of bloodroot and yarrow to decorate their work.
- American Indians and settlers in the Mountain region made baskets from split white oak using the over-and-under method of weaving. These were usually functional

baskets for everyday use. Over time, settlers incorporated some Indian design elements in their baskets. Indian basketmakers eventually began weaving decorative baskets to sell.

- Corn has been a staple food in North Carolina for centuries. American Indians have long used corn husks to make dolls and other items.
- Many people in the Mountain region made dolls, hats, and mats from corn husks. In this process, corn husks are soaked, shaped, and dried into doll shapes or cut into strips, dyed, and woven into hats and mats. The craft revival of the early 20th century led to an increased popularity in corn husk dolls.
- Carving was a craft taken up by Mountain residents, who shaped wood into decorative figures and toys. Carving was also popular with the Cherokee, who made masks, walking sticks, and other items that spoke of their traditions and culture.
- During the craft revival movement, wood carving was taught in Mountain craft schools, and carving centers emerged in Asheville, Brasstown, Tryon, and Cherokee. In 1905 Eleanor Vance and Charlotte Yale formed Biltmore Estate Industries in Asheville. For 10 years they trained local people in traditional crafts such as weaving, woodworking, and wood carving. Under their leadership Biltmore Estate Industries became nationally known. In 1915 Vance and Yale moved to Tryon and started Tryon Toy-Makers and Wood-Carvers, which they ran for more than 20 years.
- In 1946 Cherokee craftspeople and artists in the Mountains formed a cooperative to help market their work. Today the Qualla Arts and Crafts Mutual is the oldest American Indian cooperative in the United States, and it offers works by 300 artists and craftspeople. It is located on the Qualla Boundary, the Cherokee reservation.

Naturally North Carolina
Distance Learning Class Excerpt
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The Mountain Region

The Mountain region is steep and rugged, with high mountains and deep valleys. It is part of the Appalachian Mountains chain, which is the oldest mountain range in the United States.

American Indians did little to change the land, but settlers practiced slash-and-burn agriculture, which led to erosion. Later, plant disease destroyed the chestnut tree, which was an important resource for food and products.

Trees from the forests were cut for timber and burned for charcoal. Many mountains became bare.

Later, dams brought electricity and controlled flooding. Parks and recreation areas restored many acres of wilderness, but also forced people from their homes of many generations.

Naturally North Carolina

Distance Learning Class Excerpt

Page B

Color in the counties for the Mountain Region (23): Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey



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Carved Bear

Because it was difficult to travel around the Mountain region, family traditions were handed down without much outside influence for years. People made handicrafts that included basket making, weaving, woodworking, and quilting.

Carving was a craft taken up by Mountain residents, who shaped wood into decorative figures and toys. Carving was also popular with the Cherokee, who made masks, walking sticks, and other items that spoke of their traditions and culture.

Today many Mountain people continue to make traditional handicrafts.



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The Great Smoky Mountain National Park Video

The Great Smoky Mountains National Park was created in 1934 in parts of western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee.

Many groups of people lived and worked on the land. It was difficult for them to give up their homes of many generations.

Today the park hosts thousands of visitors each year, and is the home to many living things.

Let's roll the video!

Cherokee Basketry

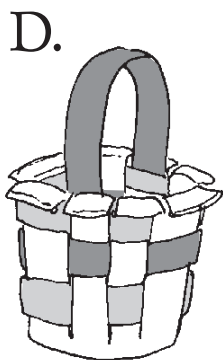
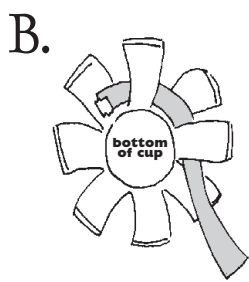
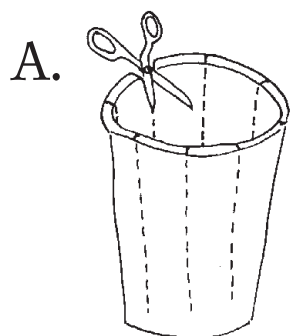
From *Tar Heel Junior Historian* 45:1 (fall 2005).



Clockwise from top) Fruit, vase, planter, and sewing baskets made by modern Cherokee women in traditional style. Image courtesy of the N.C. Museum of History.

Women in the Eastern Band of Cherokee made these baskets by hand a few years ago for the Qualla Arts and Crafts Mutual Inc., a Cherokee-owned and operated cooperative. Traditionally, there have been four main stages of basketmaking. First, the artist gathers materials—usually river cane, white oak, honeysuckle, or maple—found in nature. Bark is removed, and wood pieces are split and trimmed down. The basketmaker separates the splints, the pieces to be used in baskets, in a process called stripping, and scrapes them smooth with a knife. Splints can be left natural or colored with dyes drawn from leaves, roots, or bark. Common dyes include butternut, walnut, and bloodroot. The basketmaker then finally begins weaving. In basic checkerboard construction, a series of side-by-side splints create a warp. Weft splints are woven one at a time under and over warp splints. Other techniques create diagonal or twilled patterns, or designs. Families may pass down dye methods, patterns, and techniques.

Weaving a Paper Basket



What you need

paper cup
pencil
scissors

construction paper
tape

1. Cut the side of the cup into eight even sections (A).

2. Cut half-inch-wide strips of construction paper.

3. Tape a strip *INSIDE* one of the cup flaps. Weave the strip in and out of the other flaps until you get back to the first one. Tape the strip to that flap again. Cut off any extra paper (B).

4. Repeat step three with one change: tape the strip inside a flap *NEXT* to the first flap (C).

5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 until you get near the top of the basket. Bend the tops of the flaps out to make a rim. Add a strip for a handle (D).

People and Nature: The Great Smoky Mountains National Park

By Rachel Lanier Taylor*

Reprinted from Tar Heel Junior Historian 53:1 (Fall 2013). Images may differ from those in the original article.

When you close your eyes and think about *nature*, what comes to mind? Do you see a waterfall and mountains, or maybe deer grazing in a meadow? Now, think about what you do not see. Are there any houses, cars, or people?

Often, we forget that humans are a part of nature—not apart from it. By examining the history of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, we can see just how difficult it is to separate the history of humans from the history of the environment.

The federal government established Great Smoky Mountains National Park in 1934. The park consists of over 500,000 acres in Tennessee and western North Carolina. It has become the most popular national park. In 2011 more than 9 million visitors came to hike, camp, and take in views of nature, among numerous other activities. Such was not always the case. Before the Smokies became a place to visit, they served as a home for many people.

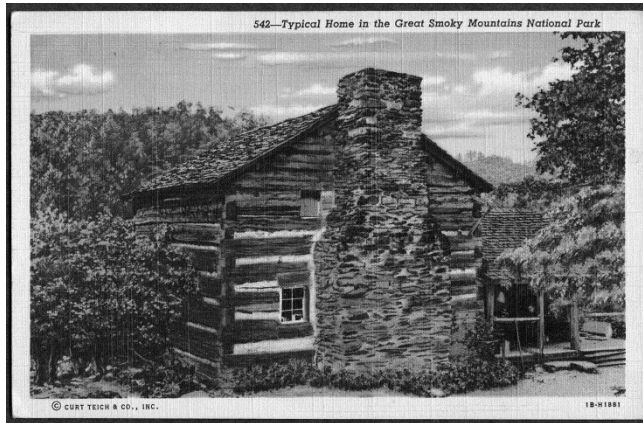
Although sometimes national parks can seem like pristine places untouched by humans, this is rarely true. People first came across the area that would become the Smoky Mountains park around 8,000 years ago. American Indians moved through the region as huntergatherers, and the Cherokee tribe later made the Mountains its home. The Cherokee Indians of the Smokies used fire to help prevent larger forest fires and the spread of plant disease around their villages. According to ethnographer James Mooney, the Indians' controlled burns helped shape the Smoky Mountains by creating balds—mountain peaks that lack trees and other typical vegetation.

Although American Indians who lived there shaped the Smoky Mountain landscape, later European settlers proved responsible for much more significant change. For example, timber and pulp companies altered parts of the area significantly, cutting through forests with railroads, steam-powered skidders, and log loaders. By the 1800s, they were damming rivers and driving wildlife from the tracts they logged. Companies that owned land in the Smokies practiced “clear cut and run” operations. This meant that workers cut down large “grandfather” trees and dragged them down the mountains, often destroying smaller trees in the way. This destructive approach to logging left many mountainsides in the Smokies scarred and prone to fires and floods.

The threat of continued forest destruction helped lead to the movement for the first national park in the eastern United States, the Great Smoky Mountains. Another reason for the interest in creating the park

was the rising popularity and financial success of western national parks, such as Yellowstone and Yosemite, which had been established near the end of the 1800s.

In the 1920s and early 1930s, the state governments of Tennessee and North Carolina—as well as individuals including Horace Kephart, Laura Thornburgh, W. P. and Anne Davis, Colonel David Chapman, and John D. Rockefeller—worked together to raise money to purchase land for the park. They believed that a federal park would protect the Mountains and bring tourists, money, and development to the region.



Former homes became tourist attractions in the new park, as on this postcard. Image courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of History.

Unlike earlier national parks, which were created from lands already owned by the federal government, the United States had to buy land from timber companies and private citizens to create the Great Smoky Mountains park. More than 1,000 farms, 4,000 people, and 5,000 lots and summer homes existed within the proposed boundaries.

Many families that lived in the Smokies planted gardens and supplemented their income by selling apples (a big cash crop in the Mountains), livestock, wild plants such as ginseng, and even bear skins and fat. Some people did not want to lose their homes and leave the land that had belonged to their families for generations.

One resident of the proposed park area expressed his frustrations to author Laura Thornburgh, who recorded his words in her book, *The Great Smoky Mountains*. The man asserted, “The Park won’t do me nor my children a mite of good. They tell me I can’t break a twig, nor pull a flower after there’s a Park. Nor can I fish with bait for trout, nor kill a boomer, nor a bear on the land owned by my pap, and grandpap and his pap before him . . . I tell ye, I’m agin [sic] the Park.”

In some cases, when people proved unwilling to sell their land, the government had to use *eminent domain* to acquire the land needed for the national park. Eminent domain is the legal power to condemn, or take without paying for, privately owned property for a public good. Even facing eminent domain, some residents tried to fight the government. Some posted intimidating signs outside their property, and a few even threatened government officials with guns.

As the issue of removing families from the proposed park area grew more controversial, the government offered leases to residents as a compromise. These leases required people to sell their land to the government, but allowed them to live out their lives in the park on the land they once owned. However, these residents could no longer use the land as they had before. Under the leases, it was illegal to cut timber, hunt, dig for herbs and roots, build new structures, graze animals, and manufacture or sell alcohol. Even planting new fields required prior approval. In effect, people could live on their land but not make a living from it.

These lease requirements made it almost impossible for many families to remain on their farms and completely changed their interaction with the natural world around them. Still, some residents managed to stay, by breaking the rules of their leases or boosting their income through tourism.

The Walker sisters of Little Greenbriar in Sevier County, Tennessee, offer one of the best examples of lifetime residency inside the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Born between 1870 and 1889, the sisters—Margaret, Louisa, Polly, Hettie, Martha, Nancy, and Sarah Caroline—supplemented their livelihoods by selling crafts, baked goods, and poems to travelers who visited their cabin. Although they benefitted from the tourism that the park created, they did not entirely approve of the approach the government had taken. Their view of the coming of the park is represented in this part of Louisa’s poem, “My Mountain Home”:

*“There is an old weather bettion house
That stands near a wood
With an orchard near by it
For all most one hundred years it has stood.*

*It was my home from infancy
It sheltered me in youth
When I tell you I love it
I tell you the truth.*

*For years it has sheltered
By day and by night
From the summer sun’s heat
And the cold winter blight*

*.
But now the park commisioner
Comes all dressed up so gay
Saying this old house of yours
We must now take away.*

*They coax and they wheedle
They fret and they bark
Saying we have to have this place
For a national park.*

*For us poor mountain people
They don’t have a care
But must a home for
The wolf the lion and the bear . . . ”*

The National Park Service initially burned many homes and barns in the Smokies, hoping to revert the area to a pristine wilderness. But this approach changed over time. Several mountain homes—including the Walker sisters’ and the Palmer family’s in Cataloochee—survive today. The Cades Cove community remains particularly intact. Although the original residents are gone, descendants of those who lived in the area that became the national park hold reunions every summer.

They remember people who gave up their homes so that the beauty of the Great Smoky Mountains could be preserved. The history of the Great Smoky Mountains is defined by humans interacting with nature. People have shaped the mountainous landscape, just as the mountains shaped human lives and actions.

**Rachel Lanier Taylor, a former education intern at the North Carolina Museum of History, earned her M.A. in history from Appalachian State University. Her thesis, "Great Women of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park," focused on the cultural and environmental history of the creation of the park. She is a descendant of the Palmer family that resided within the park boundaries. At the time of this article's publication, Taylor was a doctoral student at the University of Washington.*

Great Smoky Mountains National Park Pros and Cons

Use the article to find examples of the advantages and disadvantages of establishing the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Pros	Cons